

The Christian Education of the Negro

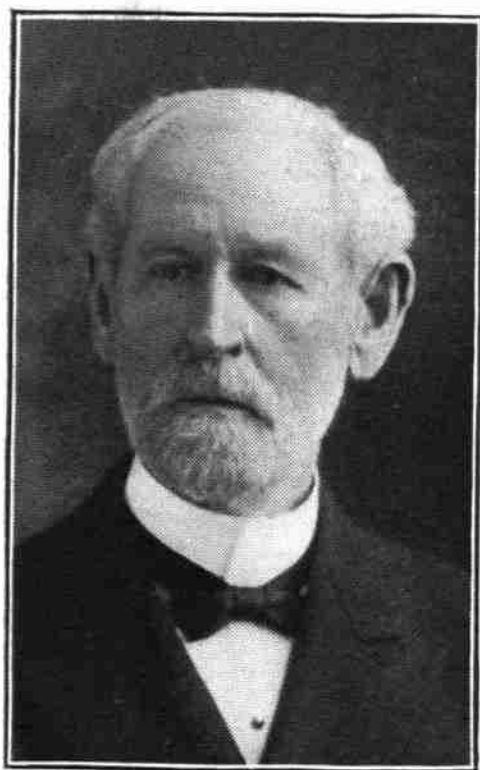
By the Board of Freedmen's Missions of the United Presbyterian Church

Headquarters: 1703 Buena Vista Street, Allegheny, Penn.

Rev. J. W. WITHERSPOON, D.D., Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer

THE United Presbyterian Church was one of the earliest champions of the cause of freedom for the Negro. It was the pioneer among the churches in taking up this cause — the uplift of a race.

Before the smoke of battle cleared away, it put forth one of the first efforts to give the Negro a suitable education.



Dr. J. W. Witherspoon

In the autumn of 1862 two bands of consecrated workers, one from Iowa and the other from Ohio, pressed to the front and, under cover of the Union army, began work among the contrabands, moving when the army moved and working when the army camped.

The General Assembly in 1863 established a Board of Freedmen's Missions, and directed them to organize on the fourth day of July, 1863, in Allegheny, Penn. The organization was effected and the legislature of the state of Pennsylvania issued a

charter of incorporation in 1865.

The First School Organized

The first school was organized in Nashville, Tenn., in the autumn of 1863, by a young minister, Rev. Jos. G. McKee, who with a band of missionaries had been appointed to the work in the Southland. The mission thus organized continued in successful operation till 1875.

In the first decade of the work for the Freedmen, 1863 — 1873 schools were opened in Nashville, Knoxville, Greenville and Memphis, Tenn.; Goodrich's Landing, La.; Natchez, Davis Bend and Vicksburg, Miss.

In the stirring times of the first years of the reconstruction period, it was found necessary to make frequent changes. Points occupied which at first gave good promise of becoming established often proved to be the most disappointing.

For various reasons, one after another the missions were closed and the teachers withdrawn, until the end of the first decade, 1873, when only two remained in operation, Nashville, Tenn., and Vicksburg, Miss. The General Assembly in 1873 planned for a reorganization of the work of the Board, the leaders in the work being fully convinced of the necessity of starting anew on the solid foundation of uniting very closely the educational and church work, maintaining the school and church together.

The General Assembly instructed the Board to secure a location for the establishment of a normal school and made an appropriation of money for the project. Knoxville, Tenn., was selected as the location, a plot of ground was secured, and in the autumn of 1875 the foundation of a permanent brick building was laid. The building was dedicated in September, 1876, and the school was opened with 4 teachers and an enrollment the first year of 140.

The Growth and Influence of Knoxville College

From this small beginning this institution has developed into Knoxville College, then one building, now 20; then 5 acres, now 75; then 4 teachers, now 31 including matrons and foremen; then the common school course of study only, now classical, scientific, literary, theological, normal, musical, mechanical, agricultural, domestic science, nurse training, etc.; then 140 pupils all residents of Knoxville, now almost 500 coming from 22 states and some from beyond the states. Eleven other mission stations have sprung up in Tennessee and Alabama, which are the direct outgrowth of Knoxville College.

These 11 stations all have valuable property interests; employ 67 teachers including 6 ministers of the gospel. These have all come from the masses through the schools under the care of the Board, and have become missionaries to their own people. They have under their tuition an average of about 2,000 every year.

In 1876, a mission was organized in Chase City, Mecklenburg County, Va., which has been fruitful of good results.

As a direct outgrowth of the Chase City mission, another was organized at Bluestone, Va.

In 1883 a school was organized in Norfolk, Va. An eligible site was purchased and substantial brick buildings were erected. The school is known as the Norfolk Mission College. From the beginning it has been largely patronized by the people